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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Ukraine Baptists present special gift

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina last August has seen thousands of acts of encouragement and support that continue to this day, but few are more special than the \$40,000 gift from Ukrainian Baptists that was received recently by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

"This gift is from the bottom of our hearts, every Baptist in Ukraine," said Volodymyr Shemchyshyn, president of Odessa Baptist Theological Seminary in Ukraine, who flew to Mississippi to present the gift to Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Mississippi Baptists partnered for many years with the Ukraine Baptist Union to spread the Gospel in that former captive nation of the Soviet Union.

"The is proof of our love," said Shemchyshyn. "I don't know how much more people will contribute, but the process is ongoing."

The Ukraine Baptists' gift is huge by that country's standards. Shemchyshyn noted for perspective that \$40,000 is more than the entire contributions last year to the budget of the Ukraine Baptist Union.

"The people of Ukraine have blessed us. We hardly know how to say thank you," said Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. "Even six months after the hurricane, the needs are as great as ever. Everything we have done in Ukraine has come back to bless us."



SPECIAL GIFT — Volodymyr Shemchyshyn (second from right), president of Odessa Baptist Theological Seminary in Ukraine, presents a letter from the Ukraine Baptist Union to Jim Futral (third from right), executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), signifying a gift of \$40,000 from the Baptists of Ukraine for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief. On hand for the presentation were (from left) Ken Rhodes, MBCB missions mobilization director; Thomas and June Nolen, former Ukraine partnership coordinators; and Brent Barker, pastor of Goodwater Church, Magee, who was hosting Shemchyshyn. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

"We did not expect the people of Ukraine to do anything for us. When we heard about the offering, we were humbled and overwhelmed."

Shemchyshyn said that after the hurricane struck, the Ukraine Baptist Union announced that each Friday would be set aside for prayer and fasting for their Christian brothers and sisters in Mississippi. A letter was also written to

every Baptist Church — about 2,000 in all — announcing the special offering.

"We did not expect people would give so much, but the people contributed more to this offering than to our Ukraine Baptist work in year's time. Old ladies would bring one, two, three grivna (currency worth about 25 cents) and tell us they wanted this to be their small contribution. There was no one who didn't help."

"We saw that we can not only receive, but give also. People gave more than they could afford to give. We saw how happy our people were to give, even people who were not members of our churches. When the people donated, it was a blessing and a lesson for us," Shemchyshyn said.

"I wish every Mississippi Baptist who has been to Ukraine could be here today," Futral said. "Forty thousand dollars is a lot of money. The financial impact is great; the spiritual impact will be even greater."

"Please receive this gift in the name of our Lord and with our appreciation for what you have done for us," Shemchyshyn said. "May God bless you, and we'll be praying for you."

Ken Rhodes, who as MBCB missions mobilization director has made numerous trips to Ukraine during and after the partnership, pointed out the importance of Baptists helping Baptists around the world. "Only when we all get to heaven will we know the full impact of this wonderful gift," Rhodes said.

Missionary murderer put to death in Yemen

SAN'A, Yemen (BP and local reports) — The Yemeni gunman who killed three Southern Baptist medical workers in 2002 at a Southern Baptist hospital in Jibla was executed by firing squad on Feb. 27, according to wire reports.

Abed Abdul Razak Kamel was shot in the central prison of the southern Ibb province as judicial officials observed, Yemen's Saba state news agency reported. Kamel was convicted for the Dec. 30, 2002, shooting deaths of Jibla Baptist Hospital director William Koehn, physician Martha Myers, and purchasing agent Kathleen Gariety. A pharmacist was seriously wounded but later recovered.

Kamel admitted in court to coordinating the attack with Islamic militant activist Ali al-Jarallah. Al-Jarallah was executed on Nov. 27 for plotting the medical workers' deaths and for assassinating a prominent national politician.

Yemeni officials believe both were tied to the al Qaeda terrorist network. Police reported finding audiotapes of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Kamel's home after the murders. Yemen is bin Laden's ancestral home.

The Jibla Baptist Hospital provided care for thousands of people in the impoverished Middle Eastern nation for more than 30 years after it was started in the Ibb province by Southern Baptist workers. The International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention relinquished control of the hospital shortly after the shootings, and it was reopened in 2003 by the Yemeni government's health ministry under the name Peace Hospital.

Since the shootings in Yemen, three IMB workers have been murdered in an ambush in Iraq, and one IMB worker died in a Philippines bomb attack.



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The end of history?

American political economist Francis Fukuyama came to the public's attention with the publication of his book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet empire. In his book, Fukuyama posited that the global conflict between political and economic systems had come to an end with the collapse of communism. He believed the human race had chosen liberal democracy, as practiced by modern western civilization, as the preferred way of life. He foresaw a Pax Americana, and the elevation of the human race to its loftiest ideals.

From Fukuyama's work came the notion of the "end of history," whereby the long struggle over the future direction of mankind had finally ended.

Those were heady days in the late 1980s and early 90s, when it seemed doors across the planet were opening to new ways of thinking. Christians joined the tidal wave of information and ideas washing over parts of the world where such freedom had never been allowed. Millions

heard the Gospel for the first time, and many were saved.

Enormous evangelistic strides were being made. Christian missionary groups strained to keep up with demand for Bibles, new church construction, and personnel. Observers excitedly talked about the coming fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The future did seem limitless.

Then came 9/11, and as we awakened from our self-induced giddiness we realized that the Evil One had raised up yet another enemy. It all started to come together for us — the senseless suicide/homicide bombings, the threats against our way of life, the loss of innocents for political gain, the talk of terrorists seeking weapons of mass destruction.

No, we had not witnessed the end of history at all. Perhaps at most a chapter of mankind's history ended with the fall of communism, but whole book is not anywhere near its end.

We again find ourselves in a monumental struggle against the ruthless rulers of darkness (Ephesians 6:12). Christianity's opponents have gotten their second wind. Across the world, Satan seeks to roll back the gains of recent years. Christianity remains outlawed, and Christians continue to be martyred.



Now comes word of another outpost in the ongoing battle against Christianity. Hugo Chavez, Marxist president of Venezuela and acolyte of Cuban communist dictator Fidel Castro, has banished a Christian missionary group from that South American country.

New Tribes Missions focuses on Christian ministry to indigenous peoples who live in some of the most remote places on earth. New Tribes has been in Venezuela since 1946. At least one of the New Tribes missionaries has been in Venezuela for

more than 40 years, according to news reports.

The bombastic Chavez has alleged at various that the missionaries are spies for foreign mining or pharmaceutical companies, or even the CIA. He seldom passes up an opportunity to threaten the U.S., and he considers the government of Iran to be a close ally.

In a world that is already so very dangerous for Christian missionaries of all stripes, Chavez's deportation of the New Tribes workers can only be seen as an ominous development. Our faith's enemies are no doubt encouraged and emboldened by this step backward — and we can likely expect more such drastic actions in the future.

Now is not the time for retreat, though. It may once again be difficult to spread the Gospel around the world, but when has it ever been easy? When has the devil ever given us a break? He is our bitter enemy, and always will plot against us until Christ returns.

The end of history? For Christians, we're not even close. There is much work left to be done. Let's get busy and refocus on the task our Lord and Savior left for us to do. An increasingly lost world is depending on us.

GUEST OPINION:



How we (mis)govern our churches

By Alan Branch
Kansas City, Mo.

Baptists believe the Bible is "the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried." Therefore, church constitutions are evaluated in light of Scripture as well. Constitutions and parliamentary guidelines are helpful and needed documentation. If there is a conflict between what a church constitution mandates and what the Bible requires, the Bible should win every time.

Business meetings held too frequently. I am convinced that churches can function effectively by having no more than two to four business meetings a year. Multiple business meetings can distract energy from Great Commission work and substitute activity for real service. Having fewer business meetings does not preclude special meetings to address new opportunities, such as building programs or the call of a pastor.

The failure to empower leadership. When I say that many Baptist churches fail to empower their leaders, I am referring to more than just the pastor or staff. When a church chooses members to serve on committees or ministry teams, then that church should trust its own members in those areas of responsibility. It is not inconsistent with the New Testament for a congregation to choose leaders from within and then empower those leaders to make decisions in their realm of responsibility.

Voting on minutia. This follows closely on the heels of the previous criticism. A congregation functions in the healthiest manner by assigning responsibility and then getting out of the way.

Allowing the immature members of the congregation to influence key decisions. Many congregations are driven to the lowest common denomi-

nator of maturity by a flawed model of ecclesiology that invites people who are immature, backslidden, or inactive to participate in key decisions. This is perhaps the most deadly mistake a church can make.

I contend that what many churches call New Testament ecclesiology is in fact a dysfunctional copy of the real thing. In contrast to a hyper-congregational model of town-meeting democracy practiced by many churches, I submit that the New Testament does not demand or endorse such a model. A more healthy form of congregational church government includes the following minimum requirements: *The congregation affirms God's call of the pastor. The congregation approves a budget. The congregation approves the ministry teams. The most mature lead. Flagrant immaturity is not left unaddressed.*

This is congregational church government. The people in leadership are chosen by the church under a budget approved by the church with leadership of a pastor called by the church. I contend that this approach provides a healthier environment that is more conducive to spiritual maturity and evangelism.

Branch is vice president for student development at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Welch: Don't let SBC miss opportunities

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Drawing from the example of Samson's loss of strength in Judges 16, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Bobby Welch warned against squandering the opportunities God has given the convention. "There is great consequence in the traumatic tragedy of unfulfilled potential," Welch told SBC Executive Committee members in Nashville on February 20.

He pointed to verse 20, which says Samson "awoke from his sleep and thought, 'I'll go out as before and shake myself free.' But he did not know that the Lord had left him." Samson had lost his hair and his strength, and the Philistines were upon him.

"That must be one of the saddest circumstances imaginable to be out flailing away and the wind of God [is] off your life," Welch said, adding that a wonderful comeback happened in verse 22 when Samson's hair began to grow again.

Welch, pastor of First Baptist in Daytona Beach, Fla., set forth three ways to "rev up a rundown romance with reaching people" for Christ.

"How do you rev up a rundown romance with reaching people? What happened to Samson, don't you think, could happen to a Christian. It could happen to a church. It could happen to a clergyman. And it could happen to an entire convention, where you get to the point that you're just flailing the air, and you know not the power of God is off your work. That day comes when we lose the love of the Lord for the sake of souls," he said.

The solution, Welch said, is for fresh fire to fall on the convention, and he believes it's already falling in the form of the "Everyone Can" Kingdom Challenge for evangelism, which has put an emphasis on witnessing to, winning and baptizing more people than ever before in the convention.

Wherever he goes, Welch said, people ask him how the effort to baptize one million people is going. "It's too early in the year to project the final count," he said, "but one thing is already clear."

"Real, effective help is coming out of state conventions and associations that I've never seen before — real, dedicated, effective help on the issue of getting before the



Welch

people, witnessing, winning and baptizing," he said. "I have not been to hardly any convention or state evangelism conference where they haven't baptized on site."

The second component in the plan to rev up a rundown romance with reaching people, Welch said, is to get out in the field. His formula for what to do out among the people is CC + DD = MORE.

"Change the conversation, then direct the discussion and you'll always get more of what you're looking for," he said. "If evangelism and discipleship is the main thing, why don't you talk more about it? Why don't we urge more? Why aren't the banners clearer? Why doesn't every conversation have it in it? The more we do that, the more we will get it done for the glory of God."

Despite the good intentions of many Southern Baptists to stay on track with the goal of "Everyone Can," some extenuating circumstances have served as distractions recently, namely Hurricane Katrina, church fires in Alabama and various political discussions among convention leaders, he said. But those must not slow Southern Baptists in the fight to win souls.

Record

"We must somehow become proficient enough in the spiritual war-fighting that we are not overwhelmed by struggles," Welch said. "Can you not fight with a scratch on your nose? Can you not lose a piece of your ear and keep going? Can you not take a flesh wound and stand up straight? Must you always lay down and whine when the least difficulty comes along?"

"In spiritual war-fighting, as in military war-fighting, you have an obligation as the leader to go on. You seize the circumstance. You don't allow the circumstance to seize you," he said.

As he stood on the hill by a burned Alabama church recently, reporters asked him if he had anything to say about the tragedy. Welch told them to watch the church.

"Watch what the church does with the fire. That's the story. Watch what the church does with the fire," he said. "The church will now take this fire, they will minister, they will share the Gospel. People will get saved and get off the road to hell."

On-line registration open

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Online registration is available for the 2006 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C. Churches will be able to register their messengers online at the SBC website, www.sbc.net, to avoid waiting at the counter upon arrival at the convention while a registration volunteer types in various lines of information. Jim Wells, SBC registration secretary, said online registration has received "a great response from messengers and is growing each year." The process includes entering information normally found on the traditional messenger card:

- the church's seven-digit ID number, which is found on the church's Annual Church Profile. To ensure security, a subsequent webpage includes a list of a number of randomly selected churches, in addition to the church matching the ID number. The church simply selects its name from the list and moves to the next step.
- the name of the church moderator or clerk whose name will appear on the printed form.
- the church's membership, gifts to Southern Baptist causes, and affiliations (local and state).
- the messengers' names and information.

Online registration ends at midnight June 10, after which registration must be done at the registration desk beginning at 4 p.m. June 11. Names can be added, edited, and deleted up to June 10 as well. Each messenger must present the printed form that shows the messenger's reference number — given on the website — at the registration booth in order to receive a nametag and set of ballots. The traditional registration method also will be available for those churches unable to use Internet access.

Looking back

10 years ago

Rory Lee is awarded a five-year contract as president and chief operating officer of William Carey College in Hattiesburg, according to a Feb. 23 press release from the school. He is expected to assume his duties on June 1.

20 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist Education Commission votes in favor of asking the state convention to double funding for ministerial education and expand the definition of a minister to include church-related vocations.

60 years ago

A nationwide radio survey made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture reveals that farm and small-town listeners prefer programs featuring religious hymns and sermons to most other programs.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer
with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my
sins and freedom from eternal
death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose
from the grave to forgive my
sins and to restore my rela-
tionship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus
Christ into my life. From this
time on, I want to live in a lov-
ing relationship with Him. (I
receive Christ as my Savior
and Lord.)

"But as many as received him,
to them he gave the right to become
children of God, even to those who
believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for
Jesus Christ today, contact a
local Baptist church for spiritu-
al guidance.

HEART PROBLEMS

The American Heart Association says that every 33 seconds in our nation someone dies from a heart related disease. It is astounding to think that almost two times every minute a life ends because a heart fails. Nationally, the number one killer of men and women is heart disease. It is a national crisis that seems only to get worse rather than to improve. In part, we bring on the problem by our wrong eating habits, our lack of exercise, our stressful working and living conditions, our wrong decision making, and our bad habits. Put some of those in combination together and you have a lethal environment.

We need to pay attention to our hearts both physically and much more importantly to the spiritual dimension of our hearts. For just as we abuse the physical muscle that is our heart pump, we also seem to have little appreciation for our heart as spoken of in the Scripture. The heart that is so important to us physically is used as an example of the importance in the life or death realities of our spiritual inner-being. The heart as referred to in Scripture is pointing to the seat of our emotions, our decision-making qualities, our will, our devotion, and



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

our determination. The great problem with looking at the heart whether physically or spiritually is the fact that it can be corrupted, damaged, and even dealt a killing blow.

While there are many other things that can go wrong with the heart, I suppose the one heart episode that gets the most attention is when someone has a heart attack. Probably all of us have had friends, family members, or fellow church members who have experienced a heart attack. Some did not live through that tragic experience. Usually, we think of it as a sudden life-changing event that just happens in a moment of time. That really is not the case. Recently, I was listening to a doctor, a cardiologist, who was describing that heart attack moment, and then he expanded to tell that actually the buildup to that moment had been in process 10, 15, or maybe even 20 years. The plaque buildup and the clog-
ging of the arteries did not

happen the night before when a potato, a big piece of meat laced with fat, or a piece of bread covered with too much butter was eaten. While this may have contributed to the attack, what led to the crisis was the weeks, months, and years of wrong lifestyle choices and ignored symptoms. In fact, what is true physically is often true spiritually as well.

Maybe you have seen a saint go astray; someone who was so involved in the Lord's work and faithful in the church and its ministries suddenly falls by the wayside. Sometimes you can even point your finger to the event, the sin, the wrong decision, and say that is what happened, but a closer examination usually reveals there are days, weeks, and years leading up to the breakdown. A sin plaque is built up, and it is no less deadly because no one sees it. That is why we need to keep a close watch over our hearts. Some statistics show that half of the people who have physical

heart attacks do not survive the event. While there may not be any stats to accompany a spiritual heart attack, it is a fact that many do not survive this tragic experience either.

What do you do with people who survive a spiritual heart attack? Well, just as it is with the physical problems, it is also extremely difficult for someone to get over this painful attack all by himself or herself. The Apostle Paul was well aware of spiritual attacks and maybe had the recuperation in mind when he spoke to those who were healthy saying, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

If we see a brother or sister who has had a spiritual heart attack, we need to help them get back on their feet. It is important to remember that they cannot do it alone and that we could find ourselves in the same situation.

The month of February is generally designated as Heart Month, but the children of God ought to consider every day as Heart Day.

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The apostle Paul expressed confidence in his Lord when he declared, "And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). This well-known verse highlights the focus of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation's Scholarship Ministry.

Due to the generosity of many faithful Christian stewards, the Foundation has the privilege of providing needs-based supplemental financial assistance to Mississippi students who are pursuing a degree at a Mississippi Baptist college or a Southern Baptist seminary. Most of these endowed scholarship accounts offer specific eligibility guidelines for awarding a scholarship grant. Factors such as field of study, institution attended, and scholarship amount often are included as stipulated criteria for award consideration.

For more information about the Mississippi Baptist Foundation Scholarship Ministry, please contact our office at Post Office Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205, telephone us at (601) 292-3210, or (800) 748-1651, or visit our website, www.mbcb.org/agencies/mbf. A completed application must be received in the MBF office by April 30.



THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION



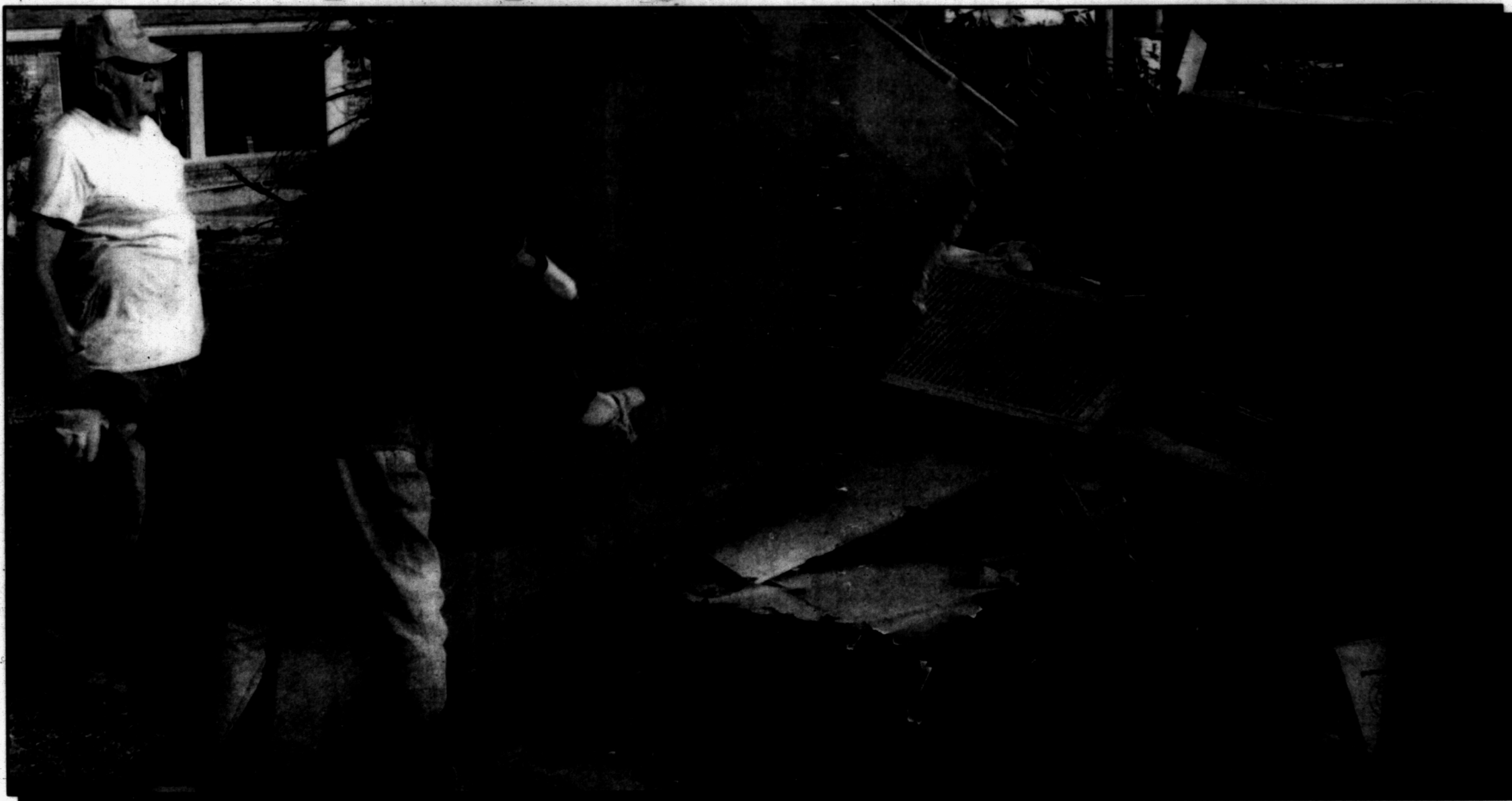
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Baptist
WOMEN'S SERVICES

Katrina report spotlights faith-based relief effort



CLEANING UP — Members of the Calhoun Association Disaster Relief Team assisted Biloxi homeowners last fall in "mud out," a Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task force program in which trained Baptist volunteers remove mud, debris, and water-soaked wallboard from the homes of disaster victims. It's not uncommon find large snakes and other creatures holed up in the uninhabitable houses. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP and local reports) — The White House, in a report assessing the response to Hurricane Katrina, praised and commended faith-based organizations including Southern Baptists for their quick and coordinated work to aid storm victims in the Gulf states.

The 228-page document report, titled *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina, Lessons Learned*, reported, "faith-based organizations ... provided extraordinary services. For example, more than 9,000 Southern Baptist Convention North American Mission Board (NAMB) volunteers from 41 states served in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. These volunteers ran mobile kitchens and recovery sites."

Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters in American history, leaving more than 1,300 dead in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama; hundreds of thousands homeless and without jobs; and tens of billions of dollars in damage to homes, businesses, and the Gulf Coast landscape.

"The Southern Baptist Convention, North American Mission Board, and other faith-based organizations provided food and shelter to many evacuees and helped them find tem-

porary and permanent housing," the White House report, released Feb. 23, noted.

However, the report also chided the federal government for not adequately integrating faith-based and non-governmental groups into the overall response effort.

"Over the course of the Hurricane Katrina response, a significant capability for response resided in organizations outside of the government," the report stated. "Non-governmental and faith-based organizations, as well as the private sector, all made substantial contributions. Unfortunately, the nation did not always make effective use of these contributions because we had not effectively planned for integrating them into the overall response efforts. These groups often encountered difficulties coordinating their efforts with federal, state and local governments, due to a failure to adequately address their role."

"We must recognize that non-government organizations play a fundamental role in response and recovery efforts and will contribute in ways that are, in many cases, more efficient and effective than the federal government's response. We must plan for their participation and treat them as valued and necessary partners."

As a result of NAMB and the 41 state Southern Baptist conventions which mobilized disaster relief, more than 14.4 million meals were prepared and served to hurricane victims and disaster volunteers. Almost 17,000 cleanup and recovery jobs were completed by Southern Baptist volunteers throughout the Gulf Coast region.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers contributed nearly 165,000 "volunteer days" in the aftermath of the hurricanes. The labor value of Baptist volunteer relief work equated to some \$22.4 million,

using a pay rate of \$17 an hour for an eight-hour day.

After the storm struck in late August, the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Unit was on the scene for most of the remainder of 2005.

Separately, more than 1,900 Southern Baptist churches nationwide have committed to "adopt" — over a one- to two-year period — one of the 400 hurricane-damaged Baptist churches in the affected Gulf states. The list of severely damaged churches includes 163 churches in Louisiana, 188 in Mississippi and 49 in Alabama. Some of the most damaged

churches have as many as 12 different adopting churches supporting them.

For more information on the ongoing Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief effort for Hurricane Katrina, go to www.mbc.org and click on the Hurricane Katrina icon. The Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force is supported by the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering and the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

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OBITUARIES

Harold E. Gartman, Sr., 66, died Nov. 9, 2005, at his residence in Pricedale. Visitation was at Calvary Church in Pricedale with internment in the church cemetery. Earl Surber, Charles Case, and Millard Moak officiated at the funeral. Gartman had been a member and pastor of Calvary for 19 years and was a former pastor of Silver Creek Church, Pike County. He was preceded in death by his parents and a sister, Patsy Gartman Lynn.

He was survived by his wife, Ann Stubbs Gartman of Pricedale; Mrs. Gartman died Jan. 30 of this year. Other survivors include two sons and a daughter-in-law, Gene Gartman Jr. of Suffolk, Va., and Ken and Kelli Gartman of Starkville; a daughter and son-in-law, Connie and Bruce Lozier of McComb; two grandchildren; a brother, a sister and brother-in-law; four nephews, two nieces and numerous cousins and friends.

REVIVALS

Calvary Church, Scott County: Revival, Mar. 5-7; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Tue., 7 p.m.; Daniel Hall, Mississippi Baptist Foundation, speaker; Rusty Walton, pastor.

First Church, Troy: Revival, Mar. 12-15, 7 p.m.; P.J. Scott, speaker; Herb and Nancy Todd, Burk-burnett, Tex., music; Greg Herndon, pastor.



1. Crosses, Sulphur Springs Church, Newton

1. Sulphur Springs Church, Newton, remembers the 50 million babies aborted in a special service on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday by placing 50 crosses in front of the church and giving over \$1200 to the local Crisis Pregnancy Center in Forest. Shown are the crosses and several church members.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

2. Bethany Church, Potts Camp, presented Donny Hill with a license to the gospel ministry. Shown are Hill and pastor Donald Worsham.

3. Calvary Church, Meridian, ordained Ryan Moore to the gospel ministry Jan. 29. Shown are Moore (center, white shirt) and the ordination council.

4. Holly Church, Alcorn Association, part of SBC's Adopt-a-Church program, recently sent a men's group to Autumn Ridge Church, Hattiesburg, to aid in Katrina disaster relief. Shown are some of the participants. Tony Morrow, pastor.

5. During December the children of Moselle Church, Jones Association, held a contest between the boys and girls to see who could collect the most "Pennies for Lottie." The children collected \$1515.86, which placed the church's offering over \$6000. Shown are the participants.



5. "Pennies for Lottie," Moselle Church, Jones Association

6. First Church, Water Valley, presented certificates to its most recent Experiencing God class. Shown are pastor Jerry Helms (upper right); standing, from left: Rubin Johnson, Diane Tuggle, and J.W. Tuggle; seated, from left: Janice Crow, Joy Crow, and Linda Trent.

7. Sunrise Church, Carthage, is hosting a wild game supper Mar. 2, 6:30 p.m., featuring professional bass fisherman Jim Phillips. For more information, call (601) 741-2225 or 267-4156.

8. Camp Creek Church, Guntown, will host an Experiencing God weekend March 3-5. Call (662) 869-5474 for more information. Martin Jacks, pastor.

9. The congregation of Union Church, Rankin County, moved into their renovated sanctuary Feb. 12. Larry Russell, pastor.



2. Ordination, Bethany Church, Potts Camp



3. Moore Ordained to Gospel Ministry, Calvary Church, Meridian



4. Katrina Disaster Relief Team, Holly Church, Alcorn Association



6. Experiencing God Class Participants, First Church, Water Valley

JUST FOR THE RECORD



10. Tucker Ordained to Ministry, Grace Church, Richland



11. Deacon Recognition Week, Victory Church, Bassfield

10. Grace Church, Richland, ordained Duncan Tucker into the ministry. Shown are Alan Stephens, Rankin County AMD, Tucker, Paige and Ella Tucker, and pastor Billy Sellers.

11. Victory Church, Bassfield, recently observed its first deacon recognition week. Shown are a number of their deacons.

12. Concord Church, Benton-Tippah Association, observed Pastor Appreciation Day Oct. 30, honoring pastor Robert E. Walker for 24 years of service. Shown are Walker



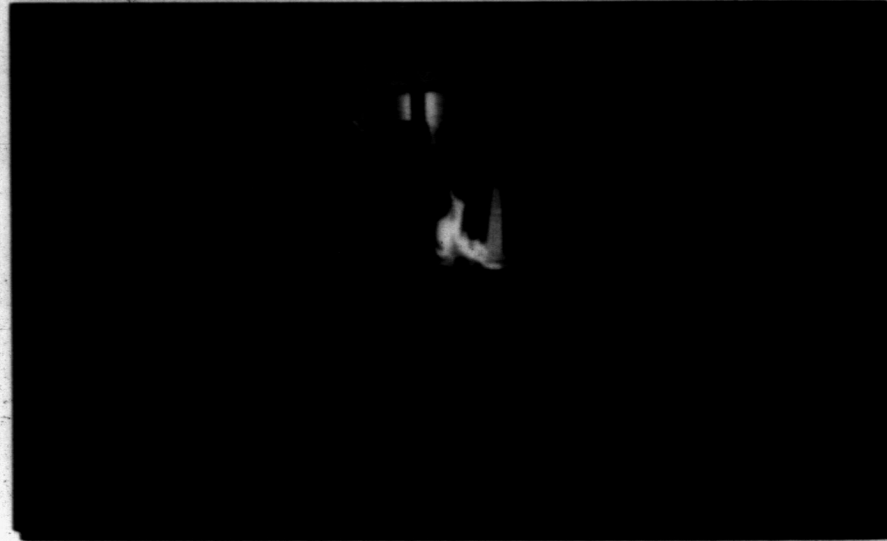
12. Walker and Ledbetter, Concord Church, Benton-Tippah Association

and deacon chairman Luke Ledbetter, presenting a gift from the church.

13. Zion Hill Church, Liberty, recently burned the note on their church debt six years early. Shown is the note burning.

14. Joel Leon, pastor of Iglesia El Camino de la Esperanza, Leland, (Way of Hope Church) is shown speaking after his ordination at Lake Village, Ark.

15. Franklin Creek Church, Moss Point, hosted Christmas in the Park Dec. 17 at the East Jackson County Community Center. Approximately 2000 people came through the doors and approximately 5000 gifts were given out with food, clothes, and over 400 turkeys. Several Southern Baptist partners helped make the event a success. Shown are some of the participants.



13. Noteburning Ceremony, Zion Hill Church, Liberty



14. Leon Ordained to Ministry, El Camino de la Esperanza, Leland



15. Christmas in the Park, Franklin Creek Church, Moss Point

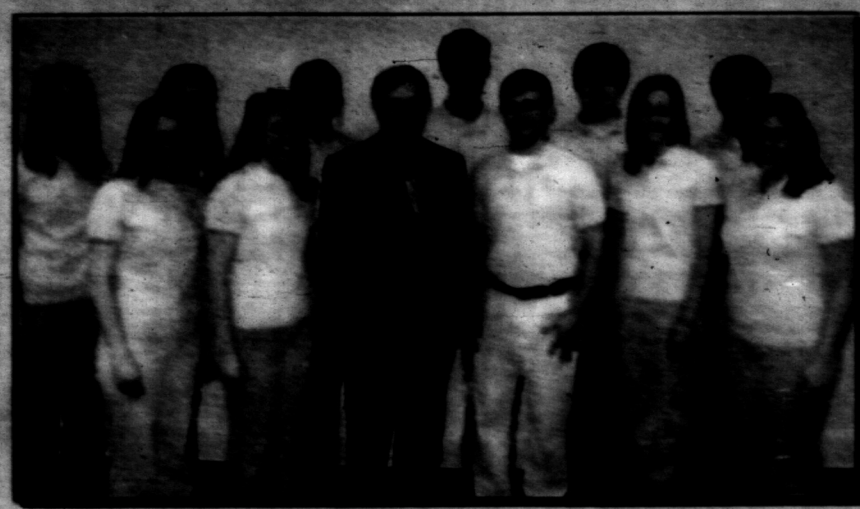
STATE CHANGES



Smith and Family

French Camp Church, French Camp, has called David A. Smith as pastor. Smith comes from Antioch Church, Golden. Shown are Smith, his wife Karen, and children Katelyn and Matthew.

COLLEGE NEWS



2. Eleven freshmen selected to Mississippi College Scout Team

1. William Carey College will host a Strategic Planning and Grant Writing for the Faith Community workshop March 30 from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. in the Thomas Business Building on the Hattiesburg campus. The cost of the workshop is \$56 for persons who register before March 17 and \$70 per person after that date. The fee includes morning and afternoon break refreshments and lunch. Registration forms and information is available by calling Tommy King at (601) 318-6774.

2. Mississippi College is proud to announce that 11 students from its Freshman class have been selected to join the Mississippi College Scout Team (the University Recruitment Team). Pictured from the left are: Gentry Leavell (Denton, Tex.); Anna Harris (Benicia, Cal.); Raynor Park (Virginia Beach, Va.); Jessica Bunting (Ridgeland); Claire Cox (Brookhaven); Lee Royce, President of Mississippi College; Davis Watts (Pearl); Steven Mansell (Bossier City, La.); Wesley Kinsey (Hattiesburg); Jenny Baker (Winter Garden, Fla.); Garrett May (Clinton); and Kayla Mason (Clinton).

3. In a letter dated February 17, Mississippi College received word that the NCAA has removed its policy restrictions in the use of the name Choctaw for MC athletics. Lee Royce, President of the college said, "We are pleased with the ruling from the NCAA giving their approval of our request to remove Mississippi College from the list of institutions subject to the policy's restrictions. We are very appreciative of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' support of our use of the Choctaw name, and look forward to continuing our mutual relationship of respect and cooperation."

4. The Department of Art at Mississippi College invites the public to attend a reception Mar. 5 honoring its senior artist students from 2 - 4 p.m. in the Samuel Marshall Gore Gallery, located in 400A Aven Hall. Artwork by the artists will be featured for public viewing Mar. 3-29, Mon. - Fri., 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. For more information, call Pam Kinsey at (601) 925-3231.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004
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O B Q L U R B J R G F O B Q
C D O J V B S, T A D S V H R, V T J R
U O H R A I S U F O S O V B G F
O B J; F U O F J A I D . T O F U R D
O Y G A L U V P U V G V B
U R O H R B Z O J T A D S V H R
J A I J A I D F D R G C O G G R G.

Z O D M R Y R H R B:

FL R B F J - T V H R

Clue: T = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Micah Seven: Two.

Carey students tour India, spread Gospel

By Charlie Hedden
Correspondent

When Sharon Thompson, missions coordinator for William Carey College (WCC) in Hattiesburg, met Dr. Lalchungnunga, principal of Serampore College in India, she had no way of knowing that an idea of hers would bring two very different cultures together.

"Dr. Lal," a Christian, was visiting the Carey campus in March 2005 to serve as a guest speaker for the school's Jubilee Chapel Service. He and Thompson spoke about mission possibilities in India, where the majority of the people are non-Christian. Most Indians are Hindus or Muslims.

From that meeting, plans were begun to partner Carey with Serampore College for a cultural exchange program.

In October 2005, WCC's vocal performance group Carpenter's Wood returned from a two week trip to India where they did more than just sing. While there, the group performed music and drama, visited sites in Calcutta and Delhi, and spent five days at the Indian university Serampore College. Serampore was founded by British missionary William Carey, for whom WCC is named.

After two days of traveling from the U.S., the group arrived in Calcutta. From there they traveled north to the town of Serampore, where the college is located. "Serampore College primarily equips individuals to be ministers in India; so there is not much of an emphasis on music," said Kathy Vail, the advisor for Carpenter's Wood. "The group taught classes on preparing music for worship. They also taught English and counseling classes."

While in India the group performed music and drama on seven different occasions, including one impromptu session in a Delhi tea shop. From Serampore the group traveled to Delhi for the remainder of their trip.

"It [the trip] was primarily a cultural exchange program for the students from William Carey and Serampore College," said Vail. The culture and conditions that the Carey students witnessed were a startling contrast to what we observe in south Mississippi. "I am very glad we went," Vail said. "It was a good trip for the students. I think that they, and everyone who went on this trip, will be forever changed."

In India, it is perfectly legal to be a Christian or a Christian organization. Public evangelism, however, is against the law. "If someone asked about our faith, we



ON MISSION — Students and faculty from William Carey College's vocal performance group, Carpenter's Wood, pose for a group picture while touring Delhi, India, on a recent two-week cultural and mission trip to the country. (Photo courtesy of William Carey College.)

could share," said Carpenter's Wood member Chrissy Paul of Zephyrhills, Fla., "but other than that we weren't allowed to approach Indians about Christianity."

The team visited coffee and tea shops simply to talk with people. If asked why they were in India, or what group they were with, the possibility of discussing Christ with the locals was pursued but it could not be initiated by the members of the group.

Paul said that the toughest part of the trip was witnessing the poverty. "Children were starving and begging for food and money," she said. "We were not able to help them because we had not prepared for that need."

Austin Miller of Union, another member of Carpenter's Wood, said, "I enjoyed going to Delhi more than Calcutta because of the work we got to do there. We helped missionaries, built relationships and befriended the people. I don't see how you can go to India, which is one of the most impoverished countries, and not be changed forever."

Paul benefited from worshiping in the home of a missionary couple who worked with the upper cast in Delhi. She said, "There was no piano, order of service, or big building. The music was strange to us but the feeling of brotherly love united us as one."

According to Vail, the poverty-stricken nation is home to over a billion people and thousands of different religions, including a growing Christian movement.

Some of the interesting sites the group had the opportunity to visit, besides Serampore College, include the home of William Carey, the home of Mother Theresa, and the Taj Mahal.

The members of the group would love to return, but there are no plans for a follow-up trip, said Kathy Vail.

Thompson's next project is a cultural exchange project to China scheduled for summer 2006. Camp Carey Abroad will offer 12 education majors the opportunity to conduct English workshops for children in one of the provinces of China. The student teachers were chosen for the six-week trip on an application basis.

The student mission volunteers are available to speak at church and group functions. Anyone interested in WCC mission efforts can contact Thompson at soaringdt@aol.com.

Hedden is a WCC mass communication major and member of The Cobbler student newspaper.

MISSISSIPPI

NORTH CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION is accepting resumes for Director of Missions position. Please send to search committee chairman, c/o North Central Baptist Association, 1045 Fairfield, Grenada MS. 38901. All resumes must be received by March 17.

PART-TIME/BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: HEUCKS RETREAT BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MISSISSIPPI, is seeking a part-time/bi-vocational Minister of Music with interests in traditional/contemporary worship styles. Please send resumes and references to Heucks Retreat Baptist Church, 2167 Heucks Retreat Rd. NE, Brookhaven, MS 39601. Attention: Chairman, Personnel Committee or call 601-672-3518.

EVANGELISTIC GROWING CHURCH looking for like-minded Minister of Education/Sr. Adult Minister. Please send resume to: P.O. Box 246, Purvis, MS 39475.

BRIAR HILL BAPTIST CHURCH, FLORENCE, MS, is accepting resumes for the new ministerial position of Minister of Education. Special consideration will be given to candidates with experience. Full-time applicants are preferred but part-time applicants will be considered. Please send resume to Briar Hill Baptist Church, P.O. Box 129, Florence, MS 39073. Attention: Terry Warren.

SYLVARENA BAPTIST CHURCH in Wesson is seeking a part-time minister of music. Please send resumes to 1119 Old Sylvarena Road, Wesson, MS 39191.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ARKADDELPHIA, ARK., serving about 270 families in a small university city, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumes to pastor search committee, First Baptist Church, 623 Pine Street, Arkadelphia, AR 71923, or to fbcarksearch@hotmail.com.

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THE BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION OF MICHIGAN is seeking applicants to fill the position of church growth ministries leader. A complete job description can be found at www.bscmi.org. Send resumes to church growth search committee, c/o BSCM, 8420 Runyan Lake Road, Fenton, MI 48430. Deadline for applications is March 20, 2006.

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Practical Principles for Christian Living

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN ACTION COMMISSION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION • VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 3



Preventing Teen Smoking is a Noble Cause



Yancey

By Lee Yancey

Some Mississippians are wrestling with how to best combat cigarette smoking. Smoking has been proven to cause lung cancer and other diseases, and from a financial standpoint, has created a strain on the state's Medicaid budget. Now, two nationally known political celebrities are pitted against each other in what may be the fight of their lives. Governor Haley Barbour, a former lobbyist who listed tobacco companies among his clients, sees things differently from former Attorney General Mike Moore, who successfully sued the tobacco industry in 1998. Mississippi's share was \$4.1 billion which is paid annually in varying amounts. In 2005, the payment was \$116 million with \$96 million going to the Health Care Trust Fund and \$20 million going to the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi. Barbour has sued to take the \$20 million annual allotment to the Partnership and instead send it to Medicaid where it would receive nearly three to one matches in federal funding that would bring the total to around \$80 million annually. Moore says, "over his dead body."

According to the Mississippi Constitution, money must be appropriated by

the legislature and subject to legislative oversight and an annual audit. Moore went around the legislature and set up the Partnership independent of them and their audits. Since 1998, there is no question that the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi has been very beneficial in education and prevention efforts. But if the Partnership loses its funding, one person Mike Moore can blame is himself. The original purpose for the Partnership was to prevent smoking, but now it seems that the survival of the organization has taken a high priority. Moore has come to the rescue of the legislature, bailing them out with Partnership money on occasion. For instance, some 50 of the state's 152 school districts have school nurses funded by the Partnership. Inside the legislature itself, a Legislative Black Caucus foundation called the Foundation for Education and Economic Development (FEED) has received \$2.9 million from Moore's group. Additionally, the Partnership's latest annual report shows FEED expenditures for a program called Motivating Parents and Children (MPAC) in 37 counties that FEED reports is serving some 16,000 youth. What about the children in the other 45 counties?

The partisan bickering is not helping prevent teen smoking. Barbour's former lobbying for the tobacco industry and

Moore's partisan doling out of Partnership money only adds fuel to the fire. The Partnership, to be effective and have a future, must have its money appropriated by the Legislature and be subjected to a state audit. If it is truly a non-partisan program whose sole purpose is smoking prevention, then the funding of selective programs in selective areas must end.

Statistics tell us that cigarette smoking kills 400,000 people a year in the United States and hooks 3,000 children a day, of whom 1,000 will die from smoking-related illnesses. Isn't it time we put aside the politics and focus on the children?

Another cigarette smoking issue in the legislature is the tobacco tax increase/grocery tax decrease. Mississippi has the third lowest cigarette tax in the country at eighteen cents a pack and has the highest grocery tax in the country. It has been proven that higher costs of tobacco prevent usage particularly among teenagers. I would think that even smokers would save money in the long run because they buy more groceries than cigarettes. Let's do whatever it takes to prevent kids from starting to smoke.

Yancey is a consultant with the Christian Action Commission. He can be reached at lyancey@christianaction.com.

"The borrower is slave to the lender."

Proverbs 22:7

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Texans partner with Coast church for Rally of Hope

By Julie Jones
Correspondent

BILOXI, Miss (BP and local reports) — Rich Miller hadn't been to Edgewater Mall in Biloxi in five months and wasn't expecting anything special during his Sunday afternoon visit — but as soon as he entered the mall, he heard the voices of junior high choir students from Prestonwood Church in Dallas and was drawn to listen for a while.

"When I walked in the door, I felt like, 'Wow, the Holy Spirit is in this place,'" said Miller, who is stationed on the Mississippi Gulf Coast for two years while serving in the Air Force and, like others in region, has weathered the trauma of Hurricane Katrina.

Gulfport resident Keshia Hinton watched the performance intently, with a hint of tears in her eyes. She could identify with the spiritual message delivered by the Prestonwood choir. "It feels like I've already been to church today, and I haven't even been. It made my day," she said.

The 100-plus choir members, leaders, and sponsors were certainly there to minister that day, but their purpose extended much further. Prestonwood's search to support a coastal congregation devastated by the hurricane led them to Grace Temple Church in Gulfport shortly after the disaster.

Ross Robinson, minister of missions and evangelism at Prestonwood, said his church always strives to be proactive in ministry in the church, community, and beyond. Providing financial support and encouragement to Grace Temple is just one way the Dallas-area church is doing that.

Pastor Rossie Francis of Grace Temple Church said it has blessed his heart to see the way Prestonwood is committed to walking with his church. "This has really brought a lot of encouragement to all our peo-



HEAVY LIFTING — Marc Minter of Team Impact in Dallas, Texas, uses metal rods to lift brothers Shomari and Kendall Johnson during a Rally of Hope at in Gulfport. Minter lowered the boys and then bent the heavy rod into a Christian fish. Prestonwood Church, Dallas, partnered with Grace Temple Church, Gulfport, to sponsor the rally. (BP photo by Julie Jones)

ple," Francis said. "My heart and hand and hat go off to Prestonwood."

The junior high and high school students and 12 men from the Prestonwood men's ministry spent much of their time helping clear land for Grace Temple's new building, in the first large-group effort in what the Prestonwood family hopes will be a lasting relationship with Grace Temple.

The two churches partnered for a Saturday afternoon "Rally of Hope," complete with a cook-

out; demonstrations of strength by three members of Team Impact, a traveling team of men that uses creative evangelism to further God's Kingdom; and a concert featuring voices from Prestonwood and Grace Temple.

Little did the choir know that the lyrics to one song, Come in from the Outside, would be so apropos. The rally originally was scheduled to take place outdoors at Milner Stadium but was forced inside neighboring Gulfport Central Middle School due to rain and cold temperatures.

The change of plans required some flexibility, including the tear-down and reassembly of a large stage set. But Rick Briscoe, associate minister of music and worship at Prestonwood, was thankful God opened up a new space for the concert and revealed a new plan.

"The Lord reminded me in the middle of the discouragement that He had a plan," Briscoe said at the opening of the rally. "The challenge is that we have to submit to His plan."

It was after Team Impact member Trey Talley shared the Gospel message that part of God's plan for the day became evident. Eight people came forward to accept Christ. One of them, a six-year-old boy, had been sick with the flu for a

week. Had the rally been outside, his father said, the family would not have attended.

Team Impact, a Christian strength and weightlifting ministry in Dallas, was the feature attraction at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally last summer in Sturgis. The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board sponsored their appearances at the motorcycle rally as part of a plan to support local Baptist churches' evangelism efforts.

The weather may have discouraged some from attending the Rally of Hope in Gulfport, but the choir students visited a nearby FEMA trailer park prior to the rally and invited anyone who opened a door.

Friends David Burnett and James McDonald responded to the invitation. The two met shortly after the hurricane and became closer when Burnett invited McDonald to live in his trailer and escape life in a tent that had become his home.

"It makes you see how precarious life is," Burnett said of the devastation triggered by Katrina. "We went overnight from a great place to a third-world country."

McDonald remembers that everything was negative after the storm and they were without food or water for two or three days, but he said it is amazing to witness people helping other people.

While many Gulfport residents were not personally affected by the storm, they still know of the great pain and tragedy that struck many lives. Trudy Johnson, for one, believes that concerts and other forms of encouragement are critical along the Gulf Coast. The ministries lift spirits, she said, and are especially helpful for young people dealing with the trauma.

"The coast needs more," she said. "Everybody's depressed. Everybody's down."

Late Saturday night, students gave testimony of what the day had meant to them. Inspired by Matthew 5:14 and a message delivered by Pastor Francis that morning, eighth-grader Matthew Cassidy shared his heart and hope for the team.

"We are that city on a hill," he said, "and we cannot be hidden from these people. This is devastation for them, and they need light."

Julie Jones is a writer with Prestonwood Church, Dallas.



PRAISE IN SONG — Rick Briscoe, associate minister of music and worship at Prestonwood Church, Dallas, leads a choir of Prestonwood students and Grace Temple members during a Rally of Hope at a junior high school in Gulfport. (BP photo by Julie Jones)



FUN TIME — Prior to a Rally of Hope in Gulfport, students from the Dallas-area Prestonwood Church play games with children from the Gulfport community. The Dallas-area church has established a partnership with Grace Temple Church, Gulfport. (BP photo by Julie Jones)

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Put Christ First

Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33

By Huey Dedmon

Instant communication has become the center of our world. Almost as soon as an event takes place around the world we can see them transpire on our television or cell phone. News travels fast, especially news of our mistakes. If someone enters into a project or agreement and does not adequately count the costs, he becomes the hot topic of discussion and the brunt of commentators' jokes. Our passages today teach us that Jesus does not want us to make any mistake when it comes to counting the cost of following Him.

It does not seem unusual for Jesus to use the strong analogies he used in our passages for today, if you consider what Jesus has been experiencing in

the preceding verses. He is trying to get His disciples to recognize that soon He will be betrayed into the hands of those who are seeking to kill Him. He has just experienced His disciples arguing over who is going to be the greatest in the earthly kingdom they think Jesus is about to institute. They still do not understand the true reason He is on the earth. As the time drew near, Jesus began His journey to Jerusalem. He entered a Samaritan town and they did not welcome Him. James and John, greatly angered, wanted to call down fire and destroy them. Jesus rebuked James and John and simply moved on to another town.

This brings us to our passage for today. In verse 57 a man



Dedmon

approaches Jesus and says he will follow Jesus anywhere he goes. Jesus' reply must have perplexed him; "Foxes have dens, and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head." (v.58, HCSB) Then Jesus urges others to "Follow Him."

They began to say why they could not do as Jesus asked. (v.59b & v.61) Jesus' seemingly harsh responses of "Let the dead bury the dead," and "No one who puts His hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (v.60 and v.62) These verses put strong emphasis on the message of our passage. He is not saying don't take care of your dead relative or your family is not important, but He is saying that to follow Him is going to be costly, more costly than we can really imagine. That is why we must trust Him. Following Jesus is not easy because we have to travel the

same road He has traveled. We are going to be rejected, ridiculed, and even sometimes killed for our belief in Jesus.

Another application for us here is in the area of personal comfort. Americans are obsessed with having what is often called "all the comforts of home" around us. Jesus does not want us to live as paupers, but He does want us to recognize our tendencies to be more committed to living the "good life" than we are to following Him. Following Jesus in our daily life pursuits is all about commitment and obedience. We must commit ourselves to obey Him at every junction in life.

As we look at the second part of our focal passage, Luke 14:25-33, it becomes even more clear how important is for us to count the cost of following Jesus. He uses the word "hate" to describe how we should feel about our family and our own lives. If you think Jesus literally means for us to hate you are missing His whole message. Jesus knows that one of the

most important thing in a person's life is personal relationships. The Bible spends a lot of time telling us how we should treat each other and that our personal relationship with Him is of utmost importance. The message in this passage is designed to call us to a complete commitment of ourselves to follow Jesus. Nothing must hold us back. The question here is a question of loyalty. Christians cannot be more loyal to family, church, job, friends, or self than we are to Jesus. Being a true follower of Christ takes our total attention and a wholehearted commitment. Jesus gives several examples of how foolish it is for us to start this journey without counting the cost. (v.28-32) His final admonition is that only those who give up their claim to everything can be His disciples. The question we must answer is; are we willing to give up everything to follow Him?

Dedmon is minister of education at First Church, Grenada.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Do You Rebel?

Isaiah 1:2-5, 11-20

By Lori Clendinning

Have you ever heard the saying "God helps those who help themselves?" This is often mistakenly attributed as being in the Bible, especially in today's do-it-yourself world. However, in this quarter's Bible study of the Book of Isaiah, we will see that Isaiah resolutely gives testimony to the Biblical truth that God does not help those who help themselves, but rather He helps those who trust in Him.

Isaiah was Judah's great prophet who lived about 760-690 BC, just 300 years after King David merged the besieged tribes and shaped a new nation. Upon David's death, his son Solomon ascended to the throne, but seeds of discontent were sown resulting from his lavish living and harsh ways. Upon Solomon's death the

nation divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. By the middle of the eighth century BC, both kingdoms were led by capable men, Jeroboam II in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Uzziah in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. When King Uzziah died, Isaiah faithfully answered God's call to ministry, saying, "Here I am, send me!"

Married to a prophetess and father of two sons, Isaiah first sought forgiveness from God for his own sins. This personal cleansing and devout obedience to God led to Isaiah's profound ministry during the Southern Kingdom's most critical time, the subjection of Judah to Assyrian rule. Sent forth as a prophet, Isaiah begged God's people to trust their Sovereign Maker and to resist help from other nations. Under Assyrian



Clendinning

control, God's people were surrounded by false gods and other religions, thus tempting them to sin. Isaiah's cry was for complete repentance, that God's people would not know death and destruction, but rather blessing and life as a result of obedience to the one and only God.

The Book of Isaiah reveals God's anguished heart toward His wayward people. Indeed, how much more plainly spoken could the Lord be? In Isaiah 1:2, He says, "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me." In verse 3, "Israel does not know, my people do not understand." He calls His children a "sinful nation" in verse 4, "a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption."

Why is holy God upset with His children? Their rebellious behavior brought about His righteous judgment. He saw their affliction and putrid state of sin. He called to their attention their rebellious living, shin-

ing the spotlight on worship rituals that were meaningless and unacceptable to Him. Then, as now, Almighty God rejects religious behavior that is not supported by right living. He does not sanction weary habits, but sustains willing hearts.

Even today God calls His people to engage in true worship with him, that of repentant, obedient lives. Sadly, some choose to live lives that are characterized by persistent rebellion against Him. Although they may have keys to the church, attend every time the doors are open, and may be considered as the pillars of their church, their private lifestyle choices show that they routinely disobey God. Oftentimes they are blind to His intervention and call to repentance, failing to recognize His discipline in their lives. When their sins are brought to their minds by the Holy Spirit, many may refuse to repent and be restored.

However, in verses 16 and 17, God offered His people a chance to put things right: "Make yourselves clean ... Learn to do right!" The people of Judah had a

choice of obedience or rebellion. They could choose blessing or destruction. Verse 18 is God's altar call, His holy invitation to repentance: "Come, let us reason together." Indeed, they had the choice of making things right with their Heavenly Father. They did not, however, have a choice regarding the consequences of their decision: they would reap what they had sown.

Repentance is submitting to the Lord and obeying Him. Rebellion is disobeying Him. God offers His people a choice between obedience and rebellion; the former brings blessing and life, the latter leads to destruction and death.

Only God has the power to restore lives. By trusting Him and obeying His commands we will enjoy the blessings of knowing Him and experiencing the abundant life that Jesus promised. May we today hear Isaiah's call and have our sins, "though they be like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." (verse 1:18)

Clendinning is a member of First Church, Brandon.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing,

and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

Cooperative Program taking 'historic step forward'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — Southern Baptist pastors and church members may be entering historic times in their stewardship and global outreach, according to a report released last week at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee in Nashville.

"... [T]oday ... we have the privilege of looking to a historic step forward as Southern Baptists in the work of the Cooperative Program," said Anthony Jordan, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

"... [I]f we follow all the way through with it, it will be a historic breakthrough for the Kingdom [and] for Southern Baptists," agreed Morris H. Chapman, president of the Executive Committee.

Not since the Cooperative Program was founded in 1925 as Southern Baptists' primary channel for supporting state-by-state, national and international missions and ministries have state and SBC leaders joined together in "a definite focus ... and a vision," as Chapman described it, to strengthen the outreach facilitated by churches' gifts through the Cooperative Program.

Jordan reported to the Executive Committee that state convention executives during their annual meeting the previous week had adopted a set of recommendations, objectives and strategies to underscore the Cooperative Program, or CP Missions, as vital to Southern Baptist efforts to carry life-changing, life-saving faith in Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

The Executive Committee, in turn, voted to commend the state executives' report "to all Southern Baptists" and to "respectfully request the state conventions act upon those recommendations" later this year during their respective annual meetings.

The recommendations note, for example, that a "commitment to biblical stewardship" must be promoted, including tithing by church members; Cooperative Program gifts provided by churches to their state conventions; and CP gifts provided by the states to global SBC causes.

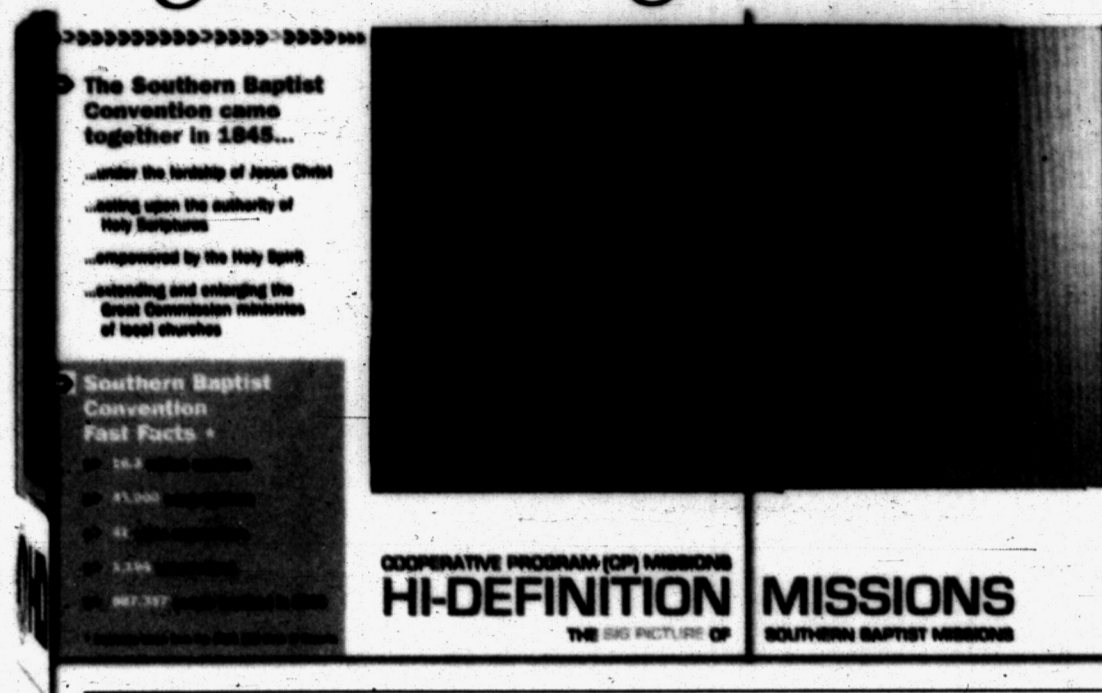
"At the heart of everything that is connected to the Cooperative Program," Jordan noted, "is carrying the Gospel through where we live, through our state, our nation and our world...."

"It is going to take us joining together as churches, as pastors and leaders, to tell the story of the Cooperative Program and to put it again in the position of being at the front end of everything we do in missions," Jordan said, noting that church allocations for CP Missions have fallen from an average of 10.6% of the offerings they received in the mid-1980s to 6.64% today.

"We believe it is essential that we re-educate and reposition and re-strengthen and tell the story again and again so that our people understand what the Cooperative Program is able to do," especially because many who join Southern Baptist churches "come out of backgrounds that have no understanding of the history of what we have done together and what we do cooperatively" through the Cooperative Program, Jordan said.

STEWARDSHIP

The Executive Committee, in addition to endorsing the state executives' report, voted to add stewardship education to its ministry assignments, pending messengers' approval during



Chapman



Jordan

the SBC's June 13-14 annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C.

The stewardship ministry — to "produce, develop, publish and distribute products that help Southern Baptists to grow in commitment to Jesus Christ by applying biblical principles of stewardship" — would be transferred to the Executive Committee from LifeWay Christian Resources, which fielded the assignment as part of the SBC's restructuring in 1997.

Since then, Chapman told the Executive Committee during its Feb. 20 session, a consensus had emerged that "the Cooperative Program and the issue of stewardship work better when they're coupled together...."

"If we are right with the Lord in the area of stewardship," Chapman noted, "we will be right with the Lord in the area of the Cooperative Program, and we will become a giving people by biblical standards."

Chapman also reported that the Executive Committee has leased the name of Convention Press from LifeWay for a five-year period for the publication of books on the Cooperative Program and Baptist history, heritage and beliefs. The first publication will be "When Saints Go Marching In: How Southern Baptists Responded to Katrina" by David E. Hankins, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and Norm Miller, a freelance writer and minister in Richmond, Va.

The cover of the book recounts that Hurricane Katrina, which has been called the worst natural disaster on U.S. soil, "presented an overwhelming challenge to public and private relief efforts. Southern Baptists' Disaster Relief organization, the third-largest in the nation, proved its worth as thousands of yel-

low-shirted volunteers and hundreds of local Baptist churches ministered to the hurricane victims throughout the Gulf Coast region. This brief account tells how and why Southern Baptists made such a difference."

CP RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations embraced by the state convention executives and, now, the Executive Committee include:

- "That every segment of SBC life be encouraged to reaffirm our commitment to biblical stewardship and to our cooperation in the Great Commission/Acts 1:8 mission," reflecting evangelism that stretches from a church's community to people who have yet to hear the Gospel throughout the world.

- "That we strongly encourage each believer to tithe of his financial resources to his local church and encourage all Southern Baptist churches to adopt a missional mindset as they contribute at least 10 percent of their undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program to local and global missions."

- "That we encourage the election of state and national convention officers whose churches give at least 10 percent of their undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program." Jordan added: "Our point is simply this: We believe that those who make decisions and those who are involved in the process of leading the work of Southern Baptists ought to be those who are committed to the very things that we're about. And that is evidenced by their commitment through the Cooperative Program. ... [T]hey are the kind of people we want to stand up and lead us and encourage us."

- "That each state convention have a plan for forwarding an increasing percentage of receipts to SBC mission caus-

es through the Cooperative Program, with the Cooperative Program Advance Plan being one possible model" as a way to give more through CP.

- "That the development of quality stewardship training materials with an emphasis on tithing should be given highest priority...."

- "That the stewardship and Cooperative Program emphases be recognized as integral parts of the compelling SBC vision known as Empowering Kingdom Growth."

- "That the 2006 SBC and state convention annual meetings be used to launch an SBC-wide celebration of and emphasis on the Cooperative Program."

- "That the Executive Committee in consultation with state convention executive directors develop a definition of what is meant by Cooperative Program monies which would be adopted by the SBC in annual session."

Among various strategies set forth in the state executives' report:

- Teaching stewardship not just in churches but also in SBC seminaries and Baptist colleges and universities, including "financial freedom" from excessive debt and poor spending habits; developing stewardship materials for various cultural groups and for children and youth; creating a stewardship-oriented website for pastors and church leaders, along with an e-mail database for delivering CP updates; and incorporating biblical stewardship into the process of planting new churches.

- Mobilizing high-profile pastors as "CP Champions" and recruiting churches to pilot a year-long stewardship/Cooperative Program emphasis to build awareness of the impact a church can have via CP Missions in fulfilling the Great Commission. A key CP resource cited by the state execs is the book "One Sacred Effort," by Hankins and Chad Brand, assistant professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary.

- Encouraging state and national publications "to actively include CP stories and information as regular features in every issue.... The CP connections must be clearly stated in each article; we cannot assume our people know all that is accomplished through their participation in the CP."

- Linking mission trips with the Cooperative Program: "To help churches understand that volunteer missions should be built on the foundation of their giving through the CP, not in place of it." Jordan added: "You would say, 'Well, that ought to happen naturally,' [that if] somebody does a state mission project or does something nationally or internationally they will immediately understand that the reason the work goes on when they get on their plane and go home is because our missionaries are serving because of our gifts through the Cooperative Program." Jordan noted: "I wish that were always the case.... [W]hat we want to do is to challenge all of us to make that the essential factor of our mission trips — that they see that the ongoing work ... is done because of their giving through the Cooperative Program."

Jordan said the state executives "from the very beginning challenged ourselves that we would do more in extending the dollars that we receive at the state conventions ... to the work that is done beyond our states to the ends of the earth.... [O]ur kingdom is not simply our state, but the Kingdom of God is the ends of the earth."